

## Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 STE-01 /017 W  
-----069884 120945Z /20

R 101424Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7295  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAN SALVADOR 1167

STATE FOR SY/OPS/T PANAMA FOR OIC/RTC

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: ASEC, ASUP  
SUBJECT: COM VEHICLE

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1099

1. CB TEAM OF ADAMS AND TRAHAN ARRIVED ON SCHEDULE  
MARCH 5 AND DEAPRTED ON SCHEDULE ON MARCH 6 AT  
1715. ALTHOUGH IT APPEARED THAT SOME PROGRESS WAS  
MADE IN REPAIRING THE CHEVROLET IMPALA COM  
VEHICLE, BY NO MEANS IS IT ACCEPTABLE FOR USE.

2. THE PROBLEM UNTIL NOW, (DEPENDING UPON THE  
MECHANIC, VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS CARBURETOR, FUEL  
PUMP OR ELECTRICAL) MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN  
IDENTIFIED ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT THE ENGINE  
OPERATES BETTER. THE CONCLUSION OF THIS TEAM WAS  
THE THE ELECTRIC FUEL PUMP HAD BEEN WRONGLY  
MOUNTED NEAR THE ENGINE BLOCK THEREBY OVER-  
HEATING. THIS WAS "SOLVED" BY MOVING THE PUMP TO  
THE REAR OF THE CAR, A COOLER SPOT; AND BY PUTTING  
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AN ADDITIONAL GASKET UNDER THE CARBURETOR. THE  
MECHANIC TOLD US THAT THE ENGINE OVERHEATS  
BECAUSE THE ENGINE BLOCK HAS A MANIFOLD OF  
IMPROPER CAPACITY. THIS IS DUE TO THE FACT  
THAT THE CAR'S ORIGINAL ENGINE WAS REPLACED BY  
A LARGER CAPACITY 1974 "SHORT BLOCK" BUT THE  
SMALLER CAPACITY MANIFLD WAS USED. ONE WONDERS

WHY. IT APPEARS THAT OUR MECHANICS ARE CREATING PROBLEMS FASTER THAN OUR ABILITY TO SOLVE THEM. A NEW MANIFOLD MUST NOW BE ORDERED, DELIVERED AND INSTALLED BEFORE IT WILL BE KNOWN WHETHER OR NOT THE CAR WILL OPERATE DEPENDABLY ENOUGH TO BE RELIED UPON FOR SUSTAINED DUTY. THE MECHANIC TEAM ALSO ADVISED THAT THE AIRCONDITIONING SYSTEM IS FAILING AND MUST BE COMPLETELY REPLACED. A SEALED VEHICLE IN SAN SALVADOR'S HEAT AND WITH THE CITY'S POLLUTION LEVEL, MAKES AIR CONDITIONING A NECESSITY AND NOT A MERE COMFORT ITEM.

3. ALSO RECENTLY DISCOVERED IS THE FACT THAT THE CAR "BOTTOMS OUT" AT THE SMALLEST BUMP OR HOLE. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS IS DUE TO THE CAR'S WEIGHT VERSUS THE SUSPENSION SYSTEM. NEW HEAVY DUTY SHOCKS WERE INSTALLED; BUT THESE APPEAR TO HAVE NO IMPROVING EFFECT.

4. FROM THE BEGINNING WE HAVE HAD TROUBLE WITH THE BRAKES. THE BRAKES DO NOT HOLD WELL AND TEND TO "FADE." NOW THE CHEVROLET DEALER TELLS US THAT THE SERVO SYSTEM IS OF TOO LIGHT A CAPACITY FOR THIS 6000 LBS. VEHICLE AND RECOMMENDS REPLACEMENT WITH HEAVIER DUTY EQUIPMENT.

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5. FOLLOWING CB TEAM DEPARTURE THE CAR SAT UNMOLESTED IN OUR GARAGE OVERNIGHT. THE FOLLOWING MORNING, MARCH 7, WE CHECKED THE VEHICLE AND FOUND:

A. SIGNIFICANT LEAK OF FLUID FROM THE TRANSMISSION;

B. AN ENGINE OIL LEAK;

C. A LEAK WHICH APPEARS TO BE FROM THE POWER STEERING; AND

D. NUMEROUS LEAKS OF GASOLINE FROM THE TANK AREA WHICH HAVE COMPLETELY SATURATED THE ARMORING OF THE GASOLINE TANK. THIS, OF COURSE, MAKES THE VEHICLE A ROLLING "MOLOTOV COCKTAIL" AND THE SLIGHTEST SPARK FROM A GLANCING STONE COULD SET OFF A MAGNIFICENT DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS, CARRYING THE U.S. AMBASSADOR WITH IT.

6. UR ASSESSMENT AT THIS JUNCTURE IS THAT THIS CAR IS PLAGUED WITH DEFECTS WHICH MAY NOT BE REPAIRABLE AND WHICH ALMOST SURELY WILL REQUIRE CONSTANT SPECIALIZED ATTENTION BECOMING A VERY COSTLY VENTURE.

7. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE THE MECHANIC TEAM ASSURED US THAT THE CHEVROLET IMPALA IS NOW IN BETTER CONDITION THAN THE VEHICLE ON LOAN TO US FROM GUATEMALA. CERTAINLY IT IS TRUE THAT THE GUATEMALA CAR IS IN BAD SHAPE. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE STEERING IS BAD; THE ENGINE RUNS BADLY ALTHOUGH WE HAVE TRIED TO KEET IT TUNED. WE SUBMIT THAT THIS VEHICLE IS MARGINAL AT BEST. WE UNDERLIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STAND THAT THIS VEHICLE IS SCHEDULED TO BE LOANED TO ANOTHER POST. IN OUR VIEW, THERE IS SOME QUESTION WHETHER THIS CAR WOULD MAKE IT OVERLAND TO MANAGUA. INSTEAD, WE RECOMMEND STRONGLY THAT IT ALSO SHOULD BE REPLACED BY A NEW CAR.

8. IN SUMMARY, EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT THE CHEVROLET IMPALA WILL NEVER PROVE SUITABLE FOR SAN SALVADOR'S REQUIREMENTS AND THREBY URGES DEPARTMENT TO AUTHORIZE AND SHIP SOONEST A NEW COM VEHICLE WHICH WILL GUARANTEE DEPENDABILITY AT ALL TIMES, BUT PARTICULARLY DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.  
DEVINE

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NNN

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**Draft Date:** 10 mar 1978  
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